

MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

TOP SECRETINFORMATION

February 6, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. KISSINGER

FROM: K. Wayne Smith *KWS*

SUBJECT: The Threat to Israel and Jordanian Force Improvement

You asked me to evaluate the Jordanian threat to Israel in light of the proposed modernization program for Jordan's armed forces.

The Jordanian Threat

While the Jordanian forces are not large by Arab standards, experienced U.S. military observers believe that man-for-man they constitute the most effective Arab army in the Middle East. The Jordanian armed forces consist of 61,000 men, about equal in size to the Syrian armed forces (58,500 men) but only two-thirds as large as Iraq's armed forces (95,000 men). They include three infantry and one armored division equivalents, two fighter squadrons, and no naval forces.

The Jordanian threat to Israel must be considered in at least two distinctly different contexts:

-- Jordan acting alone against Israel without the overt assistance of Egypt, Syria, or Iraq.

-- Jordan acting in concert with the other Arab nations in a two front war with Israel.

In the first case, there is no doubt that Israel could completely dominate Jordan militarily at little cost to itself. This proposition seems almost self-evident when the relative capabilities of the Israeli and Jordanian forces are examined.

OSD Review Completed

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-- Air Superiority. The Israeli's have a first-class air force of about 260 fighters; the Jordanians have 35 fighters, only about half of which are operational at any given time. Jordan's antiquated radar and air defenses would probably be ineffective against an Israeli attack, particularly one using the tactics employed in the Six-Day War, and Israel might well be able to take out the entire Jordanian air force in a surprise attack.

-- Armor. Jordan's armor force is its most effective force element. Yet, the Israeli armor/mechanized infantry forces include about four division equivalents compared to Jordan's single armored division. Moreover, the Israeli's have better tanks, better leadership, and more combat experience.

Given clear air and armor superiority, the Israeli have a predominance of power that should prove effective in deterring Jordan from initiating a conventional attack on them of any significant size except in concert with the other Arab Nations. On the other hand, the natural obstacles along the Jordan River and Jordan's armor could make a major Israeli attack fairly costly. Under these circumstances, Israel could, of course, move its forces more easily through Syria and out-flank the Jordanians.

The Modernized Jordanian Force

The Jordanians are capable of greatly increasing the combat capabilities of their armed forces. The reorganization and modernization program proposed by DOD will effectively serve this purpose by providing the more modern combat and support material required (see Table 1). The main elements of the program are:

-- Reducing the size of Jordan's two infantry divisions while vastly increasing their firepower through substitution of the M-16 rifle and comparably modern automatic weapons and fire support for the World War II-type weapons now used.

-- Filling out Jordan's one armored division and forming a mechanized infantry division out of a number of small and ineffective separate units that now exist.

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-- Adding one squadron of fighter/interceptor (F-5s) to the Jordanian air force's two existing squadrons. Better munitions and improved support should make all three squadrons combat effective whereas today the Jordanians could actually get only half of their force off the ground.

Overall, this modernization program should increase the real combat capabilities of Jordan's ground and air forces by at least 50 percent over a three year period with greater increases possible if Jordan is able to take full advantage of the qualitative improvement of its equipment. While this increase is substantial in relative terms, it will not change to any significant degree the overall superiority of Israel in a direct confrontation with Jordan. With continuing U.S. assistance, the Israelis themselves plan to significantly improve their own forces over this period and this improvement should more than offset any Jordanian gains.

Jordan and the United Arab Threat

Given Israeli's military dominance and its tacit support of King Hussein's regime in Jordan, it is extremely unlikely that Jordan would attack Israel except in conjunction with another general war between Israel and its Arab neighbors. In this general war situation, Israel would be faced with substantial threats on both its Eastern and Western frontiers.

-- On the Eastern Front, the combined forces of Syria, Iraq and Jordan contain 214,000 men, about 2,000 tanks, and 410 fighters.

-- On the Western Front, the Egyptian forces contain 220,000 men, about 1,640 tanks, and 365 fighters.

Considering both fronts, the Israelis are outnumbered by a third in manpower, and by factors of over two in tanks and four in fighter aircraft. Despite this Arab numerical superiority, however, the Israeli have consistently proven their ability to defeat the combined Arab forces by attacking on one front while holding on the other and then, having defeated one opponent, turn and defeat the other. The best judgment of the U.S. military is that the Israeli's will retain this overall capability for the foreseeable future.

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If this basic view is accepted, it is clear that the improvements planned for the Jordanian force structure will not significantly alter the existing balance for the following reasons:

-- The Egyptian forces on the Western Front are Israel's most difficult military problem. With continued air superiority over the Sinai and strong forces forward deployed there, however, the Israelis could probably defend their territory with smaller forces than were required to defeat the Egyptians in 1967. This would free Israeli forces for use against the Eastern front and increase Israeli capabilities there.

-- The Jordanian forces are less than a third of the overall Arab force that could be deployed against Israel on the Eastern Front. Therefore, even a 50 percent increase in Jordanian capabilities represents a relatively small increase in overall Arab capabilities. By most quantitative yardsticks (see Table 2), the full modernization of Jordan's forces would increase the overall Arab capability against Israel on its Eastern Front by less than 10 percent. The increase in Arab capabilities on both fronts would be less than five percent since the Arab forces are divided equally between the two fronts.

While our modernization program will significantly improve Jordan's military capabilities, it will almost certainly not represent any significant increase in the Arab threat to Israel even should Jordan feel that its full capabilities should be committed against Israel -- a very unlikely situation given the internal security role of much of Jordan's forces and Jordan's fear of Syrian or Israel intervention on behalf of the Palestinians.

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TOP SECRETTABLE 1THE JORDANIAN ARMED FORCES

	<u>Present (1)</u> <u>Inventory</u>	<u>Modernized (2)</u> <u>Inventory</u>	<u>Change</u>
Manpower	61,000	61,000	
Tanks	311	460	+47%
APCs	340	650	+90%
Artillery	215	340	+58%
Fighters	35	55	+58%

(1) November 1970.

(2) This represents the present Air Force inventory plus the additions programmed in the 1970 Artillery Aid package, the U.S. and U.K. Replenishment packages, the Impact package promised on December 10, 1970, and the remainder of the Modernization Program prepared by the DOD Study Team.

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THE ISRAEL/ARAB MILITARY BALANCE
ON THE EASTERN FLANK

		<u>Arab Forces on Eastern Front (2)</u>		
	<u>Israel (1)</u>	<u>Present Situation</u>	<u>After Jordanian Improvement</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Manpower	300,000	214,500	214,500	
Tanks	1,355	2,110	2,259	+ 7%
APCs	3,000	1,865	2,175	+16%
Artillery	968	1,702	1,827	+ 8%
Fighters	261	407	427	+ 4%

(1) Total Israeli forces at M+48 including those forces deployed on Western Flank.

(2) Includes the total armed forces of Syria and Iraq as well as Jordan. Assumes no improvement in Syrian or Iraqi forces for purposes of isolating effects of Jordanian improvement.

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